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BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTES.

A LITERARY HISTORY OF PERSIA. By *Edward G. Browne*. New York: Scribner, 1906. Pp. 568.

Persia with its literature, religious development and civilization is less known than it deserves to be. Though at present a state tottering under the aggressive inroads of Western civilization, it looks back upon a history of which it surely may be proud, not counting the history of ancient Persia which has originated after its acceptance of Islam. We must confess that even fairly well educated people are very little conversant with its rich literature, secular as well as religious. The only name that has come to the knowledge of the average man is perhaps that of the epic poet, Firdawsí (Firdusi). We are indebted to Professor Browne, of Oxford, England, for much that we know concerning Behaism which started in Persia under the name of Babism, and developed under the very eyes of our present irreligious generation, a new religion full of enthusiasm and filled with the spirit of martyrdom, exhibiting many phases similar to Christianity in its earliest days. To him we owe the best and most reliable information that we possess in regard to Persian language, literature and history. The present book opens to us the wealth of Persian literature from Firdawsí to Sa'di. Considering the ignorance that generally prevails on the subject it seems almost hopeless to give a sketch of its contents, for it would necessarily consist of mere names which in their foreign accent would be a sound without meaning, and so we will limit ourselves to one quotation only taken at random and selected on account of its religious significance. Among Persian poets the mystics have attained a prominent place, and among the mystic poetry there is one entitled "Mantiqu't-Tayr," which is an allegorical epic describing the quest of the birds for the mythical Simurgh. The latter typifies God, "the Truth," the spiritual aim of all aspiring souls. In the course of a discussion of the birds who make their excuses as to why they give up the pursuit of this great goal, their leader, the Hoopoe, describes the road to Simurgh, and in doing so mentions that in their search they must pass through annihilation, and they will be purged of all self and purified by their trials, yet in finding the Simurgh and losing themselves they will after all find themselves.

Professor Browne describes the passage in a literal prose translation as follows:

"Through trouble and shame the souls of these birds were reduced to utter Annihilation, while their bodies became dust.

"Being thus utterly purified of all, they all received Life from the Light of the [Divine] Presence.

"Once again they became servants with souls renewed; once again in another way were they overwhelmed with astonishment.

"Their ancient deeds and undeeds were cleansed away and annihilated from their bosoms.

"The Sun of Propinquity shone forth from them; the souls of all of them were illuminated by its rays.

"Through the reflection of the faces of these thirty birds (*si murgh*) of the world they then beheld the countenance of the Simurgh.

"When they looked, that was the *Simurgh*: without doubt that *Simurgh* was those thirty birds (*si murgh*).

"All were bewildered with amazement, not knowing whether they were this or that.

"They perceived themselves to be naught else but the *Simurgh*, while the *Simurgh* was naught else than the thirty birds (*si murgh*).

"When they looked towards the *Simurgh*, it was indeed the *Simurgh* which was there;

"While, when they looked towards themselves, they were *si murgh* (thirty birds), and that was the *Simurgh*;

"And if they looked at both together, both were the *Simurgh*, neither more nor less.

"This one was that and that one this; the like of this hath no one heard in the world.

"All of them were plunged in amazement, and continued thinking without thought.

"Since they understood naught of any matter, without speech they made inquiry of that Presence.

"They besought the disclosure of this deep mystery, and demanded the solution of 'we-ness' and 'thou-ness.'

"Without speech came the answer from that Presence, saying: 'This Sun-like Presence is a Mirror.

"Whosoever enters It sees himself in It; in It he sees body and soul, soul and body.

"Since ye came hither thirty birds (*si murgh*), ye appeared as thirty in this Mirror.

"Should forty or fifty birds come, they too would discover themselves.

"Though many more had been added to your numbers, ye yourselves see, and it is yourself you have looked on.'"

Professor Browne, in presenting the products of his labors, touches in the preface upon our narrowness and self-conceit. He insists that our form of civilization, and our modes of thought are not the only possible ones, and he would concentrate his efforts toward the broadening of our religious, material, and humanitarian ideals. The passage is so characteristic that we here reproduce his own comment on his book:

"The work itself has had my whole heart, and I would that it could also have had my undivided attention. For Islam and the Perso-Arabian civilization of Islam I have the deepest admiration; an admiration which it is especially incumbent on me to confess at a time when those are so much misunderstood and misrepresented by Europeans; who appear to imagine that they themselves have a monopoly of civilization, and a kind of divine mandate

to impose on the whole world not only their own political institutions but their own modes of thought. Year by year, almost, the number of independent Muslim States grows less and less, while such as still remain—Persia, Turkey, Arabia, Morocco, and a few others—are even more and more overshadowed by the menace of European interference. Of course it is in part their own fault, and Asiatic indifference and apathy combine with European “earth-hunger” and lust of conquest to hasten their disintegration. To the unreflecting Western mind the extinction of these States causes no regret, but only exhilarating thoughts of more “openings” for their children and their capital; but those few who know and love the East and its peoples, and realise how deeply we are indebted to it for most of the great spiritual ideas which give meaning and value to life, we feel, with Chesterton’s “Man in Green,” that with the subsidence of every such State something is lost to the world which can never be replaced.”

DIE ENTWICKLUNG DER ALTCHINESISCHEN ORNAMENTIK. Von *Werner von Hoerschelmann*. Beiträge zur Kultur- und Universalgeschichte Herausgegeben von *Karl Lamprecht*. Vol. IV. Leipsic, 1907. 48 pages and 32 plates. Price, 5.40 m.

It is gratifying to see that the subject of a doctor-thesis of Leipsic has been chosen from the field of Chinese archeology, and that interest in things of Chinese antiquity seems to be growing in Germany. The principal idea of the author is to establish a series of developments in ancient Chinese ornamentation from an original geometrical state gradually leading into a more and more realistic aspect. On the whole, he is correct in this thesis, and proves it by consulting ample material drawn from the Po-ku-t'u and K'ien-lung's Catalogue, the two best-known archeological productions of the Chinese. The limitation to Chinese drawings certainly has its disadvantages, as they are not always correct in regard to proportion, and in some cases do not even fully reproduce the whole of the decoration on the larger bronze vessels. This drawback is most obvious in the metal mirrors, in which the flat Chinese engraving entirely fails to bring out the relief-character of the design, and most of which are simply misdrawn. It is matter for regret that no legends are attached to the plates, and that no list of plates is given, and as an index is also lacking, it is possible only after considerable loss of time to hunt up what the author has to say about his illustrations. Nor is there, after all, a technical necessity for arranging pure line engravings on plates; they easily and naturally find their place in the text, where the reader can comfortably compare them with the description.

As the author is not familiar with Chinese, he consulted Prof. A. Conrady of the University of Leipsic, who most generously assisted him with his wide knowledge of Chinese literary and archeological subjects, and contributed many valuable notes to the paper. But without such assistance, he could have well availed himself of the bas-reliefs of the Han time, conveniently accessible through the work of Chavannes. Although we concur with the author in the general result of his industrious and interesting investigation, we are not always inclined to approve of his methods, or to agree with his opinions and evolutionary constructions of ornaments in every case. But it is impossible